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ABSTRACT

In 1985, the Floyd County (Rome, Georgia) School System began an induction program designed to support the entrance level teacher. The major focus of this support was the development of the Mentor Assistance Program which afforded new teachers the opportunity to work closely with veteran teachers in the field. A summative review of the program was conducted to identify the general perceptions of teachers and administrators towards the mentoring process and to evaluate the general criteria and goals of the mentoring program. Perceptions on the effectiveness of the program were identified in terms of what was experienced and what was recommended for future inclusion. Approximately 200 teachers and administrators were surveyed concerning their perceptions about the mentor process. From this population, 187 responded to the survey questionnaire. Mentors, proteges, administrators, and a random selection of teachers not directly involved in the program all placed a high value on the induction efforts. Comments most often made pointed to the need for more time for the participants to work together on common goals and for more attention to matching mentors and beginning teachers. It was suggested that the Mentor Assistance Program is vital to the overall improvement of education and that future empowerment efforts on the part of teachers should be an integral part of future considerations. (LL)

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A Synthesis of Professional Educators' Perceptions Concerning the Mentoring Process in the Floyd County Schools

ED336376

A Special Report

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Abstract

A Synthesis of
Professional Educators' Perceptions
Concerning the Mentoring Process in the Floyd County Schools

by David R. Murray, Berry College and
Mariko Tinney, Floyd County Schools, Rome, GA

In 1988, the Floyd County School System located in Rome, Georgia, began an induction program designed to support the entrance level teacher. The major focus of this support was the development of a Mentor Assistance Program which afforded new teachers the opportunity to work closely with veteran teachers in the field. A summative review of that program was conducted which evaluated the criteria and goals of the program. This report is a summary of those findings. Approximately 200 teachers and administrators were surveyed concerning their perceptions about the mentor process. From this population, 187 responded to the survey questionnaire. Generally mentors, proteges, administrators and a random selection of teachers not directly involved in the program all placed a high value on the induction efforts. Perceptions on the effectiveness of the program were also identified. Quantitative and qualitative findings were reported. Competencies were identified and presented in rank order by weighted scores. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made for future inclusion into the process. The authors suggested that the Mentor Assistance Program was vital to the overall improvement of education and that future empowerment efforts on the part of teachers should be an integral part of any future considerations.

A Synthesis of
Professional Educators' Perceptions
Concerning the Mentoring Process in the Floyd County Schools

by David R. Murray, Berry College and
Mariko Tinney, Floyd County Schools, Rome, GA

Introduction:

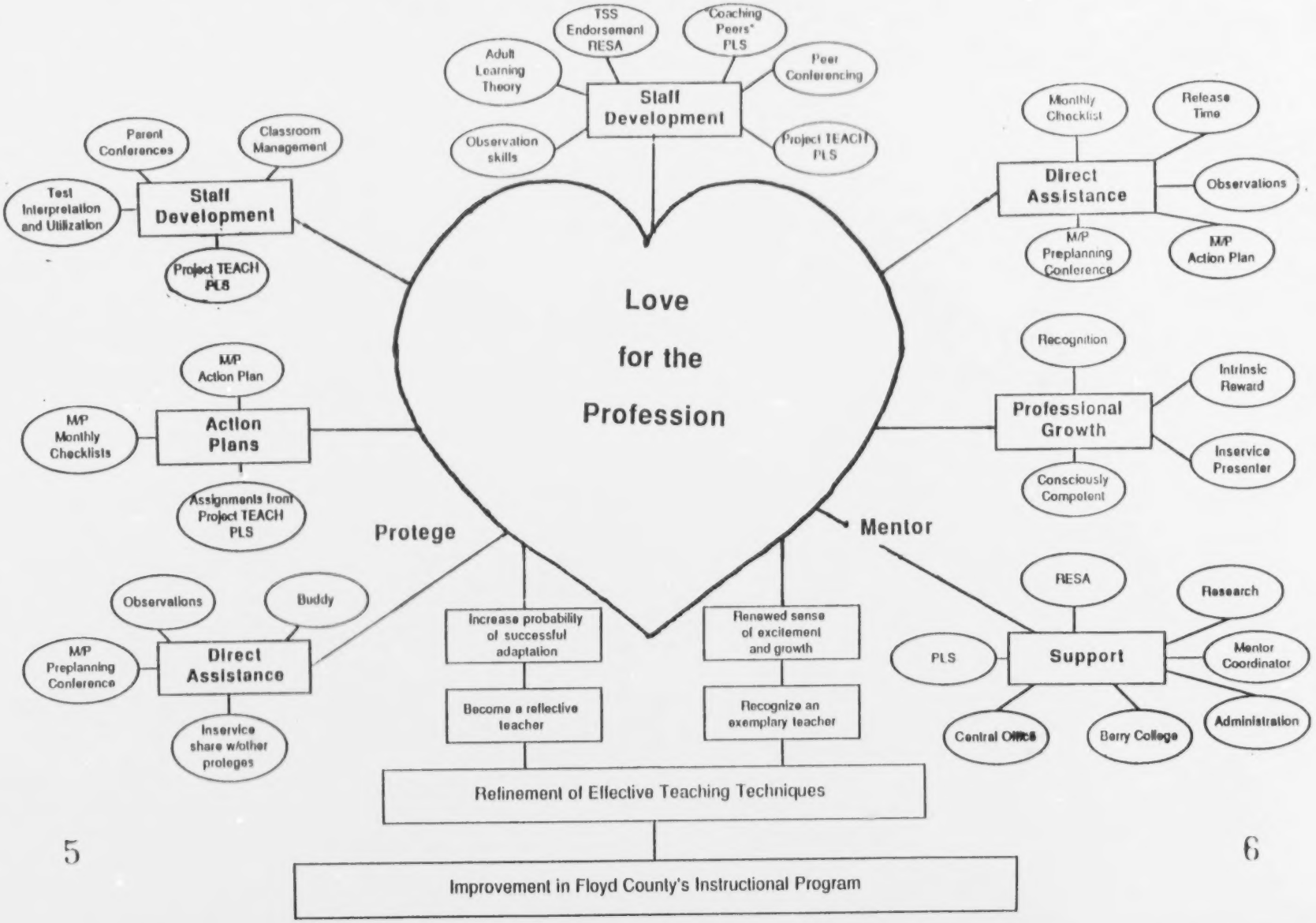
In 1988, the Floyd County School System began the Mentor Assistance Program with grant support received from the North West Regional Educational Services Agency. Floyd County was one of only four county school systems to receive this aid. The financial support was inherently designed to stimulate the development of programs directed towards improving the induction process for entrance level teachers.

Although the beginning teacher was initially the focus of support for the program, Floyd County Schools generally viewed these endeavors as a career improvement program for the mentor teachers as well as for the proteges. Beginning teachers received assistance through a series of staff development programs, a set of action plans and direct assistance. The objective was to increase the probability that the new teacher would successfully enter the public school environment and, during this process, become a more reflective teacher.

In addition, the mentor teacher received staff development and direct assistance and support from a variety of sources. These leadership opportunities were created to promote a renewed sense of excitement and encourage continued professional growth for veteran teachers. The program was also designed to recognize exemplary teachers. Overall, the objectives set forth by the Mentor program were for both groups of participants to be able to contribute to the improvement and refinement of effective teaching techniques and, in turn, improve the greater instructional program of the school system. Finally, the intrinsic values of teaching and love for the profession were at the heart of Floyd County's efforts.

Figure 1

Floyd County's Instructional Improvement Program for Mentors and New Teachers



Project Objectives:

The major focus of this study was to identify the general perceptions of teachers and administrators towards the mentoring process and evaluate the general criteria and goals of the Floyd County mentoring program. Perceptions on the effectiveness of the program were identified in terms of what was experienced and what was recommended for future inclusion.

Participants of the Study:

After a thorough review of the literature, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to mentors, proteges, administrators and a random selection of teachers not directly involved in the program. Approximately 200 teachers and administrators were invited to participate in the study. From this population, 187 participants elected to return the questionnaires. The respondents represented elementary, middle school and high school levels of teaching. When the population is examined by level, elementary teachers represent 45%, middle school teachers represent 35% and high school teachers consisted of 20% of the population surveyed. Table 1 presents grade level taught by respondent classification.

Table 1
General Information: Level Taught and Level of Education

Classification	Total	Elementary	Middle	High
admin	16	not reported	not reported	not reported
mentor	32	19 (61.29%)	10 (32.26%)	2 (6.45%)
protege	54	29 (59.13%)	15 (30.61%)	5 (10.2%)
other teacher	85	24 (30.00%)	31(38.75%)	25 (31.25%)
Total	187	72 (45.00%)	56 (35.00%)	32 (20.00%)

The average teacher participating in the survey had over 13 years of experience while mentors and administrators averaged more than 14 years. The typical protege had between 1 and 3 years of experience represented an average 1.79 years. Refer to Table 2, Years of Experience.

Table 2
General Information: Years of Experience as Teacher and Administrator

class	# of Respondents	Avg years as Teacher	Avg years as Administrator
admin	16	16.00	4.5
mentor	32	14.23	
protege	54	1.79	
other teacher	85	13.85	

Approximately half of the responding population held graduate credentials. Ninety percent of the administrators held six year Advanced Graduate Certificates or Educational Specialist degrees. Over 65% of the mentors held graduate credentials while only 47% of the teachers not directly involved in the mentor program had graduate degrees. As would be expected, only a small percentage of the proteges had completed graduate course work. This data, presented in Table 3, shows that the mentor teachers had more academic training than their counterparts who were not directly involved in the program. This would suggest that those teachers interested in serving as mentors placed a high value on academic preparation.

Table 3
General Information: Education Level of Respondents

Classification	Bachelor	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate	No answer
admin	0 (0.00%)	1 (9.09%)	10 (90.91%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (31.25%)
mentor	11 (34.38%)	17 (53.13%)	4 (12.5%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
protege	43 (87.76%)	6 (12.24%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (3.7%)
other teacher	43 (52.44%)	29 (35.37%)	10 (12.20%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (3.66%)
Total	97 (55.75%)	53 (30.46%)	24 (13.79%)	0 (0.00%)	13 (6.95%)

Programs of Preparation:

Both mentors and proteges were required to engage in the district wide improvement programs. The program included staff development, an action plan and direct assistance. In regards to the demographics of mentor training, approximately 68% attended project "T.E.A.C.H." and over half attended "Coaching Teachers". Both programs were conducted by Performance Learning Systems (PLS). Twenty three percent prepared through the Berry College program and others attended the

Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA) internship and instructional program. The RESA and Berry college graduate programs offered opportunities to mentor candidates to receive training leading to state certification in Teacher Support Services (TSS). Over 69% attended two or more professional development programs. Refer to Figure 1, Floyd County's Mentor program and Table 4, Professional Development Program Involvement.

Table 4
Professional Development Program Involvement

General Information: TSS Programs Participated In by Mentors
TSS Endorsement held by 12 (37.50%) respondents
TSS Endorsement in Progress by 13 (40.63%) respondents
Not reported 7 (21.88%)

Professional Development Program Involvement	
Type of Program	# of Respondents Reported
Berry College Program:	7 (22.58%)
RESA's "TSS Instructional Course"	12 (38.71%)
RESA's "TSS Internship"	8 (25.81%)
PLS's "Project T.E.A.C.H."	21 (67.74%)
PLS's "Coaching Teachers"	16 (51.61%)
Number of Combinations Respondents Reporting	# of Respondents
One Program Only	8 (25.81%)
Two Programs	15 (43.39%)
Three Programs	6 (19.35%)
Four Programs	2 (6.45%)

Quantitative Findings:

The survey instrument was designed to solicit responses about the program in several ways. First, general perceptions about the overall mentoring process were solicited. Then respondents were asked to evaluate the content of the mentor program in terms of what they experienced and what they recommended for future inclusion. Respondents were also asked to rate specific competencies they felt mentors should posses prior to assuming mentoring responsibilities. Finally an open

response section was included to provide opportunities for the respondents to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as to make suggestions for strengthening the program.

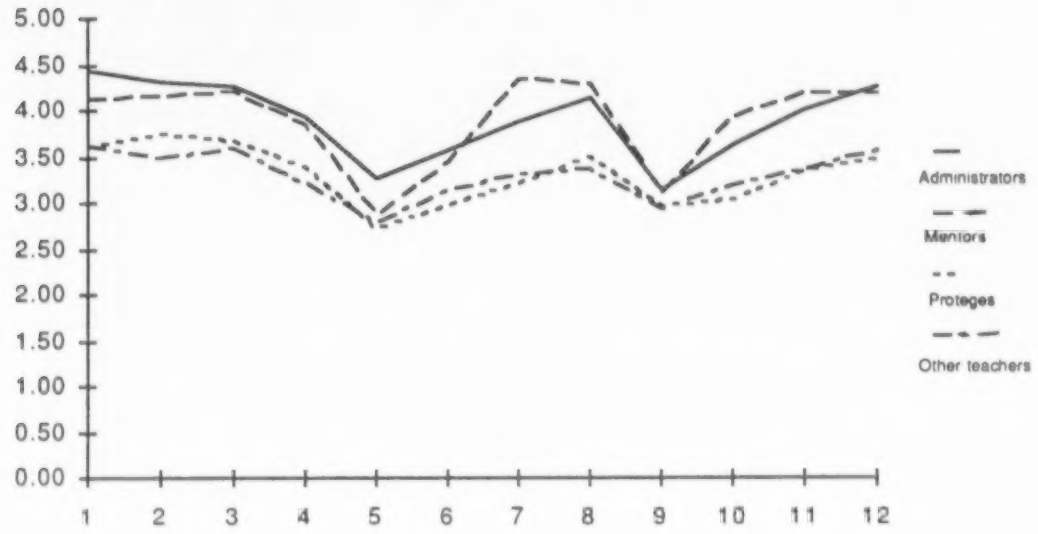
Perceptions of the Program:

Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of the program by evaluating twelve specific items using a scale ranging from totally agree to totally disagree. The responses were then given a numerical score rated from a high of 5 to a low of 0 for each individual statement.

Each of the four groups responding to the survey perceived the program positively. However, it is interesting to note that in a comparison of the responses by group, administrators and mentors consistently gave the program a higher rating. Further the ratings of these two groups were comparable while the ratings of proteges and the teachers not directly involved in the program were closely aligned. This dichotomy was reflected in the greater majority of the perceptions that were surveyed. Mentors are selected by their administrators and perhaps they were selected because their views are more closely aligned with them. Another possible explanation could be that as the randomly selected group of other teachers had not been exposed to the training and literature that the administrators and mentors were, their opinions may be merely based on this lack of exposure. Proteges, on the other hand, may have given a lower rating because, as a protege, there is a certain level of vulnerability which exists in the very nature of being a new teacher. Until teachers view teaching as an ongoing professional development growth process and accept new teachers as being at the entrance stage of that process, this feeling of vulnerability will persist. When this continuum of development is fully accepted and established, and the new teacher truly believes that the protege/mentor relationship is free from being a part of a formal or informal evaluation process, their feelings about themselves and the mentoring process will change and begin to reflect the process as an effective educational improvement program. A comparison of the responses by group is presented in a line graph format in Figure 2, Perceptions by Group.

Figure 2

Perceptions of the Program: Weighted Score by Group



Overall the perceptions of the program were very positive. All four groups responding to the survey indicated that the Floyd County School System Mentor Training Program strengthened instructional competencies and generally assisted teachers in making informed decisions. They also strongly perceived the program to provide real structured assistance to colleagues. In addition, all groups felt that the mentoring process built collegial collaboration among teachers. Finally, all groups indicated that the mentor program can be very instrumental in keeping beginning teachers in the profession. These positive responses suggest that the program goals such as teacher retention, improving the instructional program of the school system and creating a renewed sense of growth for experienced teachers were being met.

Although there was agreement in terms of developing a collegial environment through the mentor process, there appeared to be no illusions concerning teachers' attitudes about the mentor program's impact on teacher satisfaction, career advancement or even whether the mentoring process promoted the development of "political survival skills" which might exist in order to achieve tenure or promotion.

There was also some dissention between administrators and mentors with proteges and other teachers concerning the program's promotion of communications skills and professional skills. On the average, administrators and mentors perceived these areas to be more effective than did the protege and the teachers not involved in the program. In addition, they were not as positive about the program's effectiveness in developing a commitment to the teaching profession.

Proteges did not view the mentoring process as a means of promoting risk taking in regards to using new teaching strategies. In short, innovation was not viewed as integral to the mission of the mentor program. However, the mentors and administrators who answered the questionnaire, indicated a certain level of agreement that this concept may be a vehicle for bringing about change. This would suggest that the induction process may very well be the place and time in a professional development sequence whereby transformation of instruction and learning processes may, in deed, occur. If, in fact there is an agreement at the leadership levels by both administrative and veteran teachers to pursue this direction, some mechanism needs to be in place to insure that new teachers and teachers in general, will not be penalized for exploring innovative methods of teaching and learning. Creating avenues in this direction may also improve communications between teachers, the sharing of professional skills and assist in developing a commitment to the profession by allowing new teachers to participate in activities which may have an impact on the overall profession. Table 5 presents the respondents responses to questions concerning perceptions of the program.

Table 5
Comparisons of Questions by Weighted Score - Perceptions
Ranking Scale 5-0; 5 being the highest

Ques #		Admin	Mentor	Protege	Other Teacher	All
1	Strengthens instructional competencies and assists teachers in making informed decisions	4.44	4.13	3.62	3.61	3.78
2	Builds collegial collaboration among teachers	4.31	4.16	3.74	3.49	3.75
3	Provides structured assistance to colleagues	4.25	4.22	3.68	3.59	3.78
4	Helps teachers become more satisfied with work	3.94	3.84	3.38	3.20	3.43
5	Helps create career advancement opportunities	3.25	2.88	2.71	2.79	2.82
6	Promotes risk taking in using new teaching strategies	3.56	3.43	2.98	3.13	3.18
7	Promotes development of communication skills	3.88	4.34	3.21	3.31	3.51
8	Promotes development of professional skills	4.13	4.28	3.49	3.35	3.62
9	Promotes development of political survival skills	3.14	3.11	2.94	2.92	2.98
10	Develops a commitment to teaching profession	3.63	3.94	3.02	3.17	3.30
11	Provides experienced teachers with renewed sense of growth	4.00	4.19	3.33	3.35	3.55
12	Helps keep beginning teacher in the profession	4.25	4.19	3.45	3.57	3.70

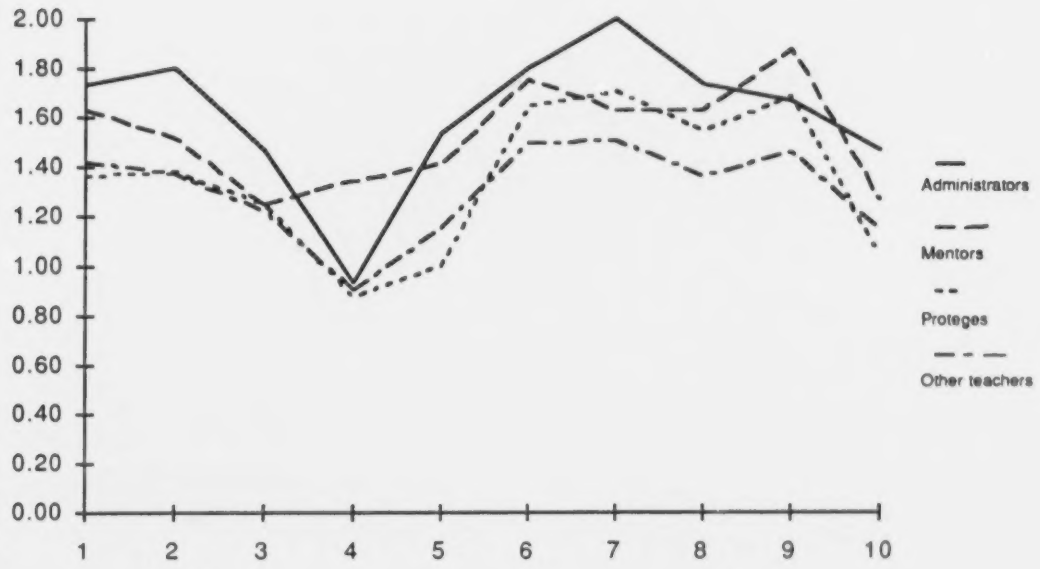
Content of the Program:

There are many commonly accepted practices which are generally perceived as vital and, therefore should be considered for inclusion into any school induction program. All four groups were asked to cite their recommendations concerning these common practices on a scale of 2 indicating that the item was extremely valuable; 1 indicating that the item was of value and should be included or 0 indicating that the item was of little value and should not be included.

All four groups participating in the study reported similar value judgement trends on the particular content areas surveyed. In essence, a rank ordering of the content areas would be similar for each group. Again, however, administrators, in general, gave higher value ratings to individual items, while proteges and teachers not involved in the program responded with lower ratings. A graphical analysis of these trends is portrayed in Figure 3, Content of the Program by Group.

Figure 3

Content of the Program - Weighted Score by Group



Proteges, administrators and the randomly selected group of other teachers not directly involved in the program strongly recommended that mentors should arrange for proteges to observe the mentor and other teachers modeling their teaching techniques. This would facilitate an orientation to a variety of teaching styles and a multitude of learning environments. This item received the highest recommendation from these three groups on a weighted scale. Mentors, on the other hand, rated their direct observation of the proteges and providing feedback to their protege as being more valuable. It should be pointed out however, that they perceived their role to be viewed as a "buddy" to the protege, not as an evaluator. Proteges concurred with this position, ranking it second. In addition, a high value was placed on veteran teachers being formally trained as a mentor before assuming that assignment. Administrators, in particular, were very strong to support this. Eighty percent cited this pre-mentor training as extremely valuable while the remainder cited it as valuable. There was also agreement that mentors should have opportunities to provide inservice training to proteges and that training should be viewed as an ongoing process.

The lowest overall score given in the content area dealt with the requirement of monthly checklists or other forms of documentation. Mentors were the only group who suggested that this would have any value. The other groups concerned perceived this type of documentation to be a bureaucratic process and of little value. Furthermore, in order for the program to achieve its goals, it must be built upon a foundation of trust and confidentiality. Refer to Table 6 for a detailed analysis of the responses related to the content of the program.

Table 6
Comparisons of Questions by Weighted Score - Content
Ranking Scale 2-0; 2 being the highest

	Question	Admin	Mentor	Protege	Other Teacher	All
1	At the beginning of the school year, mentor and protege should develop goals for the protege.	1.73	1.63	1.36	1.42	1.47
2	Veteran teacher should receive mentor training before being assigned as a mentor.	1.80	1.52	1.38	1.37	1.44
3	Mentors should be given the opportunity to provide inservice training to proteges.	1.47	1.24	1.25	1.22	1.25
4	Mentors should be given a monthly checklist or other form of documentation to complete during the year.	0.93	1.34	0.88	0.91	0.98
5	Mentors should meet as a support group at least 3 times during the school year.	1.53	1.41	1.00	1.15	1.19
6	Mentors should observe their proteges and provide feedback.	1.80	1.75	1.64	1.49	1.61
7	Mentors should arrange for proteges to observe other teachers.	2.00	1.63	1.71	1.50	1.63
8	Protege should observe the mentor model techniques.	1.73	1.63	1.54	1.36	1.49
9	Mentor should be viewed as a "buddy"" to the protege, not as an evaluator.	1.67	1.88	1.68	1.45	1.62
10	Training for the mentor should be an ongoing process.	1.47	1.27	1.04	1.14	1.16

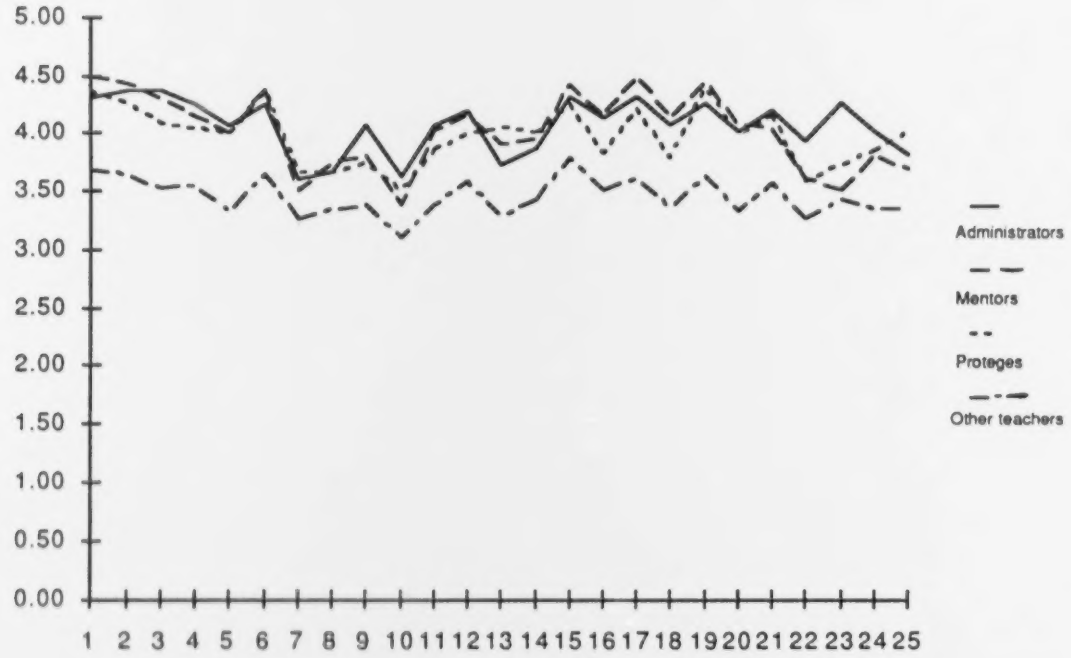
Emphasis and Development of the Competencies:

Of particular interest was how each group perceived the various competencies and skills that they believed mentor candidates should be able to provide. A listing of 25 separate skill items was identified for evaluation. Respondents were asked to rate the items according to their value on a scale of 5 (totally agree); 4 (strongly agree); 3 (agree); 2 (disagree); 1 (strongly disagree); and 0 (totally disagree). All of the competencies cited in the survey were agreed to be of value by all groups. In fact, most of the competencies received ratings well above the median level of 3 (agree). In addition, separate group rankings for each individual competency remained

consistent. Specifically stated, no real difference was identified between the weighted scores of the groups who participated in the mentor program. The randomly selected teachers not directly involved with the mentor program, had similar rankings for each competency but they consistently rated the competencies lower than did the proteges, mentors or administrators. Figure 4 represents these findings.

Figure 4

Competencies of the Program - Weighted Score by Group



Among the most highly valued competencies were areas that focused on social skills and providing assistance to the new teacher. Fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and creating an attitude of inclusion for new teachers and sharing ideas about teaching and learning strategies represent competencies with high ratings. Mentors forming collegial relationships with new teachers and encouraging self-reliance and self-efficiency among their proteges were also highly valued. These social skills appear to be the foundation for all other components of the program and, being directly connected with program goals, would surely reflect a successful program.

High on the priority list of competencies was the ability of the mentor to demonstrate and to promote effective teaching techniques. This would suggest that mentor teachers should possess a large repertoire of instructional deliveries that have been proven effective in direct instruction. Also of high importance was in providing assistance to the protege in the building of classroom management skills.

Administrators strongly agreed that mentors should be able to use clinical observation skills and be able to conduct pre and post conferences during these sessions. Mentors should have the communications skills necessary to provide feedback on these observations. In addition, mentors should be able to demonstrate peer conference skills and demonstrate to proteges how to motivate students by providing a climate of high expectations.

Proteges cited very strongly that mentors should understand and share learning theories and demonstrate systematic processes for planning. In this area of planning, mentors and administrators also included assisting proteges in selecting and evaluating learning resources as well as helping them to integrate new technological methods into their instructional delivery as being of high value. Administrators placed a very high value on collaborative planning as well, while mentors and proteges cited this as important but not as valuable. Mentors should also use reflective teaching models and should try to motivate new teachers towards identifying ways and setting goals for professional improvement.

When one reviews the competencies which received the lesser ratings, an indepth investigation may be in order. These competencies, interestingly, were areas that directly relate to effective schools research. They include skills in data collection and interpretation; diagnosis of children's specific learning styles; fostering the understanding and articulation of the school mission; assessing specific learning levels and learner capabilities as well as using several assessment methods to improve learner performance; and the fostering and encouragement of parent cooperation and involvement. For the most part, these skill are areas that focus on developing an understanding of learning and the individual learner. This would suggest that the focus of the greater majority of respondents was placed on direct large group instruction rather than on identifying individual student instructional needs. This is somewhat contrary to the recent published research in teacher

education which promotes a heightened awareness of the importance of individualization and individual student learning. Refer to Table 7 for a rank order listing of competencies by descending value and for a comparison of weighed scores by group.

Table 7
Rank Order Comparison of Questions by Weighted Score - Competencies
Ranking Scale 5-0; 5 being the highest

Competency	Admin	Mentor	Protege	Other Teacher	All
Foster an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion for new teachers	4.31	4.50	4.38	3.68	4.08
Share ideas about teaching and learning strategies	4.31	4.41	4.24	3.79	4.07
Assist in building classroom management skills	4.25	4.44	4.39	3.62	4.04
Encourage self-reliance and self-efficiency among new teachers	4.25	4.38	4.37	3.64	4.03
Form collegial relations with new teachers	4.38	4.44	4.26	3.64	4.02
Demonstrate/promote effective teaching techniques	4.31	4.50	4.20	3.61	3.99
Use clinical observation skills	4.38	4.31	4.09	3.53	3.90
Demonstrate how to motivate students	4.19	4.03	4.15	3.56	3.87
Demonstrate peer conference skills	4.25	4.16	4.04	3.54	3.85
Encourage novice teachers to create a climate of high expectations for their students	4.19	4.16	3.98	3.59	3.85
Assist in selecting and evaluating learning resources	4.13	4.16	3.81	3.49	3.75
Demonstrate systematic processes for planning	3.88	3.94	4.00	3.41	3.71
Use reflective teaching models for self analysis	4.06	4.00	4.00	3.31	3.70
Motivate novice teachers to set goals for improving professionally	4.06	4.03	3.87	3.39	3.70
Understand established district and building level school policies	4.00	4.06	3.98	3.32	3.69
Integrate newer technological methods with traditional instructional delivery	4.06	4.13	3.79	3.36	3.68
Understand and share learning theories	3.73	3.91	4.04	3.27	3.64
Understand and apply stress management techniques	3.81	3.69	4.00	3.35	3.64
Engage in collaborative planning and organizational processes	4.00	3.81	3.85	3.34	3.63
Use several assessment methods to improve learner performance and instructional programs	4.06	3.81	3.74	3.39	3.62
Foster and encourage parent cooperation/involvement	4.25	3.50	3.72	3.42	3.59
Assess specific learning levels and learner capabilities	3.67	3.75	3.66	3.33	3.53
Foster understanding of and articulate school mission	3.93	3.59	3.59	3.26	3.47
Diagnose children's specific learning styles	3.60	3.50	3.67	3.25	3.45
Promote skills in data collection and interpretation	3.63	3.38	3.50	3.09	3.30

Qualitative Findings:

To allow respondents to express themselves freely concerning the general quality of the program, a free response section was added to the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to cite their perceptions on weaknesses and strengths of the program. They were also asked to interject recommendations that they felt would improve the program.

Without much reservation all groups indicated that overall, the district wide Mentor Assistance Program was a very good program. Further, they felt that it was an excellent way to provide awareness and support for new teachers and promote the continued growth of veteran teachers. Administrators, in particular, were very positive about the program. One even suggested that the mentors were providing the kind of instructional support that they had not been able to do or to provide new teachers because of other duties that constantly took priority.

Upon further review of the free response section, other patterns emerged which collectively began to identify respondents' views of the major strengths and weaknesses of the program. The comment made most often revolved around the need for providing more time for participants of the Mentor program to work together on common goals. Mentors and proteges found it very difficult to meet as often as they would have liked simply because they had different planning periods. These scheduling conflicts were working against the optimum effectiveness of the program. Mentors specifically suggested that not enough time was allocated to them to allow them to efficiently conduct their support responsibilities.

Matching mentors and new teachers together was cited quite frequently as an area of major significance. Many of the proteges indicated that it was very important for new teachers to be able to work with mentors that had common interests and personalities that complemented their own. Both mentors and proteges also suggested that their counterparts should teach the same subject or grade level. This would enhanced their opportunities for collaborative planning. In addition a common frame of reference is needed to allow for the exchange of ideas related to the resolution of curricular problems, identification of the ability level of students and in the sharing of resources.

When good matches occurred, new teachers reported that they were able to reduce the amount of stress they originally felt and had become more confident in their working environment. Mentors also suggested that when a good match was arranged, relationships developed more quickly and they were better able to work as a team. Once this happened, the relationship reached a level where the mentor could foster open and candid remarks and could become "sounding boards" for ideas. The feeling of isolation was reduced by both mentors and proteges.

Comments from mentors, proteges and other teachers suggested that the paperwork involved in the program may actually be reducing the effectiveness of the program. Many felt that the process had become bureaucratic in nature and somewhat "form oriented." The teachers not directly involved in the program indicated that some of their colleagues, who were mentors, had actually been discouraged by the paperwork. One mentor suggested that although he loved sharing ideas with new teachers, he would not assume the role of a mentor again because of the paperwork and the pressure that was put upon him to be accountable for everything he did. It would appear, at least in the free response category, that all groups responding to the survey would like to see the program become less bureaucratic, and instead, become simpler and more spontaneous to individual needs.

A few comments were made that would suggest that a very small minority took advantage of the system. For example, one new teacher indicated that after the initial formal workshops, she did not see her mentor again. At least one mentor and one administrator suggested that they perceived the role of the mentor to be a way of sorting out the less abled teachers. This philosophy underscores the purpose of the program. It would also appear that the potential for lack of commitment by a mentor may have been part of the rationale for generating much of the bureaucracy of the program and that the comments concerning the mentor's role as an evaluator may account for the lower scores reported by the proteges. Although these are isolated remarks and represent a small minority, these types of perceptions could very easily misrepresent the program goals and eventually lesson program effectiveness.

Lack of communications appeared to be a problem for some of the building level administrators and some of the teachers that were not directly involved in the program. Some of these teachers reported they were not aware of the training

programs or district level activities. Both groups indicated that they would like to see more people have access to the training programs whether they elect to be an active participant or not. When more people are informed about the program and more people receive training, they will be in a better position to lend their support.

It is interesting to note that some respondents suggested that the group planning process currently in place at the middle school level was providing some of the same types of support that the mentor program offered. Elementary school level teachers, who do not have this collaborative planning process in place, would appear to receive the most benefit from this part of the mentor program. However, even though the group planning characteristic of the middle school concept is an excellent support process, it does not replace the one-on-one attention a protege receives from a mentor.

Recommendations:

The responses from the population surveyed, both quantitative and qualitative, strongly supported the continuance of the mentor program. In fact the data suggests that the program is, in deed, meeting its goals. More information and a commitment to a continual information flow about the program was strongly desired and needs to be formalized.

Atmosphere:

First and foremost the atmosphere that is created in the induction program must be open and free from fear of judgement. Mentors and proteges alike must have space to learn, exercise and refine their skills as they engage in the support program. Everyone from the top down must work from the concept that professional development is an ongoing life long experience and all professional educators are working towards improving themselves, supporting their peers and are also focused on ultimately improving the overall profession of education. It should be quite clear from the onset, that the Mentor Assistance Program is a collegial support process that is void of any evaluative judgements either formally or as a hidden agenda. Inclusion, not exclusion, should be the developmental perspective.

Communications:

This survey would suggest that the entire educational community would like to know more about the program and the opportunities it creates. A newsletter published twice a year may meet this need. In addition to schedules on training sessions, testimonials from administrators, former proteges and mentors might provide a personalized touch. Comments on recent research and new teaching models and techniques might also be included. This newsletter could be shared with other school systems and as the Mentor Assistance Program becomes a premiere program, its stronger elements will be emulated by other systems.

Bureaucratic paperwork should be kept to a minimum. Any required paperwork needs to be simple and easy to complete. It also needs to maintain a certain sense of flexibility in order to accommodate the special needs of both mentors and proteges.

Accountability:

The program should be built upon a foundation of trust and faith. People in the program should be treated with dignity and afforded the opportunity to do the best that they can with what resources they have available to them.

An advisory committee might be established. This advisory committee should be made up of past mentors and past proteges and building level and district level administrators. This committee would advise the school system on future program development and review disputes between mentors and proteges related to the clarification of responsibilities. The committee should also survey the program participants periodically to ascertain what works and what does not. From these periodic reviews, changes in the program may be directed.

Future training:

All training programs were rated to be valuable. The PLS programs, in particular, received high ratings. Competencies, which were rated by rank order within the context of this report, should be specifically identify for inclusion in the training program. There should be an effort to orient teachers towards developing individual student learning and growth potential. Training programs should be open to all teachers and administrators who wish to participate. This type of inclusionary practice will help all teachers to understand the program and feel part of the process of teacher induction. This will also create a pool from which future mentors may be

drawn. This reserve pool would allow mentors to step down or serve every other year giving them time to be reflective about the program and allow them time to engage in other activities.

Future directions:

As the concept of teacher empowerment becomes more of a reality, efforts should be made to train teachers in the areas of group dynamics and peer leadership development. Major focus should be to promote group decision making processes. New teachers as well as mentors should be engaged in these processes.

Programs designed around the concept of parental inclusion and effective engagement of parental talents, the use of instructional technology and community service may also be areas for future consideration. Implementation of these types of concepts will redirect the teachers' role from that of a disseminator of information to that of a manager of resources and resource people. The teacher of the future will decisively be in a leadership role in the schools and, once again, in the community in which they serve.

Summary:

Teaching will be going through a transformation over the next decade. There will be an attempt to bring more focus on individualized needs of students through diagnosis and prescriptive techniques. Activities will include providing leadership to direct parents, paraprofessionals and technical specialists towards new instructional challenges. Mentor programs will assume a greater role in preparing new teachers to assume these changing roles. The Floyd County system, in many ways, has been a leader in providing ongoing and continual professional development for its teachers. If this focus continues and grows, the program will undoubtedly be able to meet the future needs of its constituency and provide leadership to the profession as well.